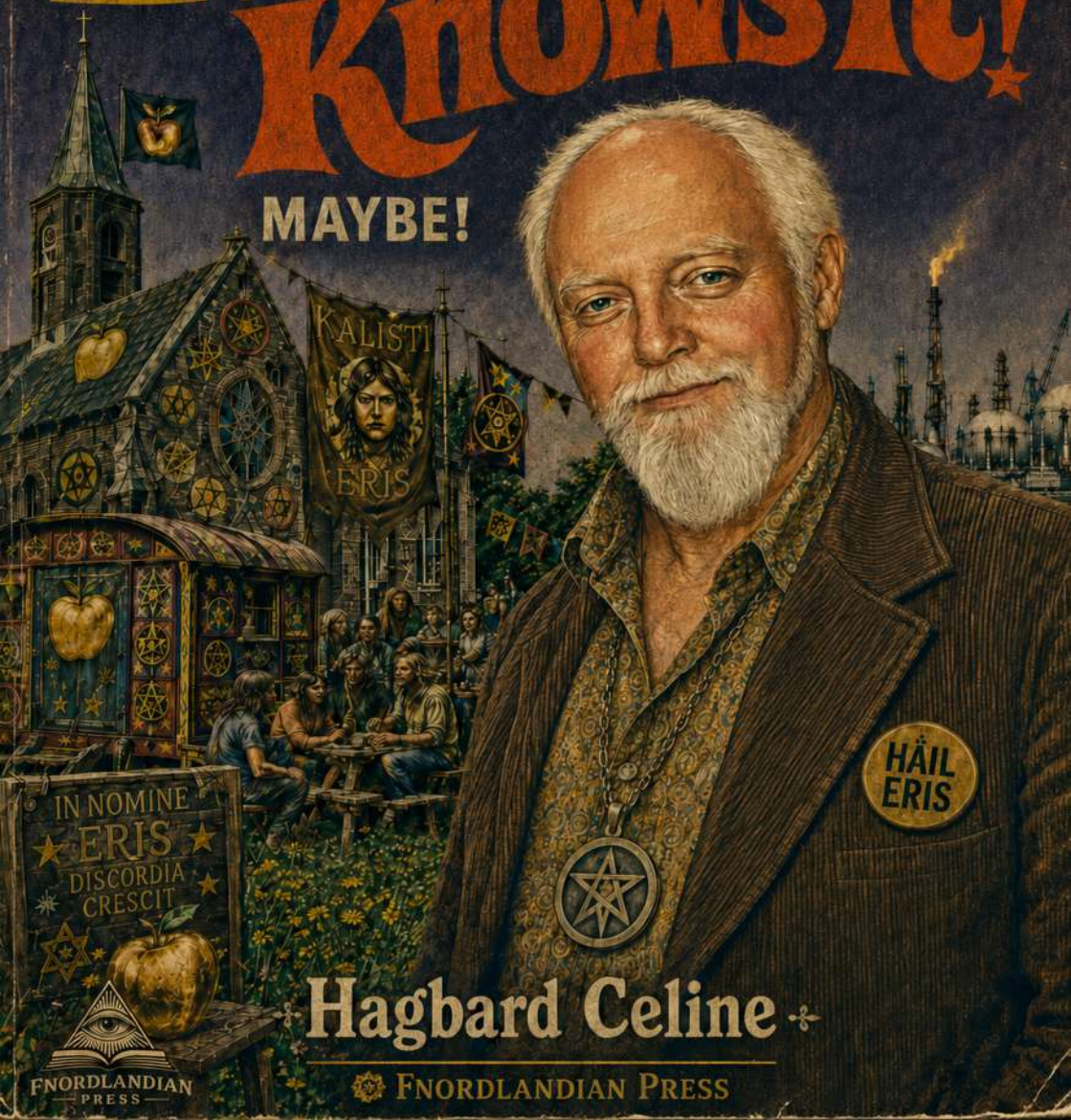


NOW EVERYONE KNOWS IT!

MAYBE!



Hagbard Celine



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Introduction: The Threshold of Spatial Autonomy

Within the heavily industrialized western harbor of Amsterdam, amid a sprawling expanse of petrochemical storage facilities, mechanized container terminals, and the relentless infrastructure of transoceanic logistics, exists a profound spatial and cultural anomaly. This anomaly is the artist village of Ruigoord, an agrarian settlement that has fiercely and successfully maintained its identity as a cultural freeplace for more than half a century.¹ The history of this village is not merely a localized narrative of urban resistance; it stands as a canonical chapter in the broader European history of spatial reclamation, alternative governance, and deep ecological consciousness.³ The precise turning point for this territory—the threshold between its historical obsolescence and its rebirth as a legendary autonomous zone—occurred on Monday, July 23, 1973.¹

The phrase "Now everyone knows," translated from the dramatic realization that a clandestine, underground plot had successfully materialized into a highly visible and unassailable socio-political triumph, perfectly encapsulates the events of that summer. What began as a subversive mobilization of urban squatters, avant-garde poets, and psychedelic visionaries to prevent the bulldozing of a condemned rural settlement became an internationally recognized phenomenon.⁷ By occupying the village on the very day it was slated for total demolition, the collective not only saved a physical geographic location but inaugurated a decades-long sociological experiment in communal living, psychedelic exploration, and radical urban preservation.⁷ This exhaustive report delineates the complex geohistorical

substratum of Ruigoord, the socio-political mechanics of the Dutch squatter movement that enabled its foundation, the critical phenomenological events of July 1973, and the enduring ideological frameworks that have allowed the village to persist as a legalized enclave within a heavily capitalized industrial zone.⁶

The Geohistorical Substratum: From the Oer-IJ Estuary to the Petrochemical Blueprint

To fully comprehend the magnitude of the 1973 occupation and the existential threat that the village faced, one must first examine the deep topographical, hydrological, and historical context of the land itself. The territory that Ruigoord occupies was not always stable *terra firma*. Until the mid-19th century, Ruigoord was an island situated within the tidal waters of the IJ bay, a dynamic brackish estuary connected to the Zuiderzee.¹⁰ The surrounding hydrology consisted of a complex ecological system of tidal marshes, silted creeks, and gooseneck channels.¹²

Archaeological stratigraphy reveals that human engagement with this specific landscape is ancient. Neolithic populations were active in the tidal marshes along the main Oer-IJ tidal channel, as evidenced by a flint scraper and sharpened poles discovered in the top of the Wormer deposits at the Afrikahaven AH-4 site, dating back to approximately 3195 BC.¹² For millennia, the landscape evolved organically, with post-Roman eutrophic peat development continuing well into the ninth century beneath what is now the IJ-Polder clay.¹²

The monumental hydro-engineering projects of the 19th century radically altered this ancient landscape. The construction of the North Sea Canal, built between 1865 and 1876, necessitated the massive drainage of the surrounding waters and the systematic polderization of the IJ bay.¹⁰ This vast hydro-engineering reclamation effort was designed to connect the emerging financial capital of Amsterdam directly to the newly built system of sea locks on the west coast at

IJmuiden.¹⁰ In doing so, it shifted the region's economic paradigm from localized maritime fishing to a transoceanic system of capital accumulation fueled by colonial trade routes.¹⁰ Ruigoord ceased to be an isolated island and was transformed into an agrarian polder village, its inhabitants largely engaged in farming, livestock rearing, and local commerce.¹³

For nearly a century, the village existed in relative obscurity, characterized by thick-walled homes and a quiet, devout Catholic community. However, the post-World War II economic boom generated an insatiable, state-sponsored demand for industrial expansion. By 1968, Joop den Uyl, the influential Amsterdam alderman for Economic Affairs (and later Prime Minister), articulated a sweeping, modernist vision for the region.⁷ Driven by a steadfast belief in unbridled economic progress and the absolute necessity of expanding petrochemical and cargo throughput, the municipality of Amsterdam finalized plans to systematically engulf the rural municipality of Haarlemmerliede, where Ruigoord was located, to construct the sprawling Afrikahaven.⁷

The nomenclature of the surrounding docklands—Afrikahaven (Africa Harbor), Cacaohaven (Cocoa Harbor), and Petroleumhaven—served as a stark geographic ledger of the colonial and industrial supply chains that the port was explicitly designed to facilitate.¹⁰ Under the auspices of this development, the municipality initiated a relentless campaign to depopulate the village. The agrarian residents were progressively bought out of their properties through compulsory purchase orders, their historic homes slated for structural obliteration to make way for a desolate industrial landscape of coal, natural gas, and oil storage.⁷ By the early 1970s, the village was nearly abandoned, standing as a

ghostly remnant of rural life awaiting the inevitable crush of the municipal wrecking ball. However, the state's bureaucratic calculation failed to account for a burgeoning urban subculture that viewed such modernist homogenization as an existential threat to human creativity, ecological balance, and architectural heritage.⁷

Geohistorical Era	Key Developments at the Ruigoord Site	Ecological and Economic Implications
Neolithic Period (c. 3195 BC)	Human activity in tidal marshes; flint scrapers and wooden poles utilized (Afrikahaven AH-4 site). ¹²	Early human adaptation to dynamic, brackish estuarine environments; subsistence living.
Early Middle Ages (up to 9th C.)	Continuous eutrophic peat formation beneath the IJ-Polder clay. ¹²	Natural carbon sequestration and development of marshland ecology.
1865 – 1876	Construction of the North Sea Canal; drainage of the IJ bay; Ruigoord ceases to be an island. ¹⁰	Complete hydrological transformation; integration into global colonial trade routes; birth of the agrarian polder village.
1968	Alderman Joop den Uyl solidifies plans for the Afrikahaven expansion. ⁷	Hegemonic modernist planning prioritizes petrochemical expansion over organic rural communities.
Early 1970s	Systematic municipal buyouts and depopulation of Ruigoord. ⁷	The erasure of agrarian heritage to facilitate fossil fuel and cargo throughput.

The Legal Architecture of Urban Rebellion: The Dutch Kraakbeweging

The foundation of Ruigoord cannot be isolated from the broader context of the Dutch kraakbeweging (squatter movement), which emerged conceptually in the Great Depression and matured into a formidable anarchist and social force by the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ During this period, the Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, was experiencing a severe, systemic housing shortage exacerbated by property speculation and municipal policies that favored large-scale commercial development over affordable residential zoning.¹⁵

The legal architecture of the Netherlands inadvertently provided a highly fertile environment for the squatter movement. A pivotal 1914 decision by the Dutch Supreme Court established a highly specific, phenomenological threshold for demonstrating residential use of a property: the presence of a chair, a table, and a bed.¹⁵ Because Dutch civil law at the time did not automatically default in favor of absentee property owners regarding trespassing evictions, activists discovered that if they could occupy an empty building and rapidly establish this rudimentary triad of domesticity, the owner was forced to engage in protracted civil litigation to secure an eviction.¹⁵

This legal loophole was weaponized by urban activists to wage a broader war against the destruction of urban heritage. In the early 1970s, the Nieuwmarkt neighborhood in central Amsterdam became a violent and highly publicized flashpoint when the city attempted to demolish historic

residential blocks to construct a modernist subway corridor and an urban motorway.¹⁴ Squatters occupied the condemned buildings, effectively transforming the act of illegal residence into a sophisticated mechanism of urban preservation.¹⁴ By appropriating vacant and deteriorating structures, the movement forced the municipality into a stalemate, eventually saving entire historic districts from being wiped out in favor of speculative property development.¹⁴

It was within this highly charged atmosphere of urban rebellion that the fate of Ruigoord reached the ears of the Amsterdam underground. The impending demolition of an entire village for the sake of petrochemical expansion represented the ultimate manifestation of the state's disregard for organic communities.⁷ The squatter movement, recognizing the strategic and symbolic value of a rural outpost, began to plan an audacious intervention.⁶ The concept was no longer just about securing emergency housing; it was about the ideological appropriation of space, establishing a territorial foothold where an alternative society could be cultivated entirely outside the normative constraints of the Dutch welfare state.³

The Baseline of Rural Resistance: Tante Jans and the Original Inhabitants

Crucial to the moral legitimacy of the impending occupation was the presence of a few original villagers who had staunchly refused to accept the government's financial buyouts. The urban squatters could not be framed as mere opportunistic invaders if they were seen as defenders standing in solidarity with the rightful, rooted inhabitants against a faceless industrial monolith.

The most legendary of these figures was Jans van Elst, affectionately known throughout the region as "Tante Jans" (Aunt Jans) or Jans Schuitemaker.⁷ Born in 1902, Tante Jans was the venerable mascot of the village who operated a small grocery store on the Middenweg, the central artery of the village, alongside her husband Jaap.¹⁸ She represented the deep, agrarian soul of the polder. When the municipality pressured her to leave, she famously declared that the state would only take her property "over her dead body," emphasizing that she was born there and refused to yield her home.⁷

Tante Jans frequently recounted memories that served as a stark ecological baseline for the activists. She recalled a time, less than one human lifetime prior, when the water in the local polder ditches was clean enough that she could fill her wooden clog and drink directly from it.¹⁹ This memory of pristine hydrology stood in devastating contrast to the millions of years of clean earth that were rapidly being suffocated by the industrial pollution of the adjacent harbors.²⁰ The presence of Tante Jans—who would

eventually pass away in 1998 at the age of 96 and be buried in nearby Halfweg—provided the incoming squatters with an unassailable moral shield.⁷ The resistance was a symbiotic alliance between the hyper-modern urban avant-garde and the deep-rooted agrarian traditionalists.

The Prelude: July 22, 1973, and the Subversive Priesthood

The timeline of Ruigoord's salvation is anchored to two critical days in the summer of 1973, characterized by a unique and unprecedented alliance between traditional religious authority and radical urban bohemianism. The municipal authorities had meticulously scheduled the final demolition of the village's core, including its historic Roman Catholic church, the Sint-Gertrudiskerk, for Monday, July 23, 1973.⁶ The heavy machinery, including a specialized crane designed to swing a massive iron ball against the thick brick walls, had already been mobilized to the perimeter.²² The structural obliteration of the settlement was considered a bureaucratic certainty.⁴

However, the resistance had already quietly infiltrated the village. For weeks, a vanguard of urban squatters had been covertly camping in the garden of the local rectory, consolidating their presence under the linden trees and preparing for a confrontation.²³ The critical turning point—the true spiritual foundation of the free state—occurred on Sunday, July 22, 1973.²³

On this day, the local Catholic priest, Pastor G. van Dijk, who had shepherded the small, pious parish for many years, performed the final mass in the Sint-Gertrudiskerk.²² The church was packed with crowds mourning the end of their community.¹ Following the mass, in an act of profound subversion and pragmatism, Pastor van Dijk formally deconsecrated the church.²³ Recognizing that the municipality's wrecking crews would destroy the building the following morning, he made a historic decision: he handed

the heavy, physical keys of the church directly to the squatters.⁶

The priest understood that the only way to save the historic structure from demolition and subsequent vandalism was to entrust it to the very radicals who opposed the state apparatus.²³ With the transfer of the keys, Pastor van Dijk was effectively dismissed by his superiors; his housekeeper, Juffrouw Els, was picked up by relatives, and the priest departed for a monastery.²² In that singular moment, the building immediately transitioned from a Roman Catholic sanctuary to the impenetrable fortress of a new cultural revolution.²³

The Act of Foundation: Monday, July 23, 1973

When the sun rose on Monday, July 23, 1973, the state's demolition teams, union workers, and municipal representatives arrived expecting to execute a routine demolition.¹ Instead, they found that the village had been comprehensively and masterfully occupied.⁷ The secret was out; hundreds of people from Amsterdam had flooded into Ruigoord overnight, claiming not only the deconsecrated church but the remaining empty houses along the Dorpsstraat.⁷

The operation was a masterpiece of logistical surprise and non-violent resistance. The squatters had parked cars horizontally across the narrow access roads, physically blocking the heavy cranes and demolition vehicles from advancing into the village core.²² The phenomenological contrast at the barricades was striking. On one side were municipal officials and union workers from the harbor, dressed in suits and leather jackets, their faces red with anger and impatience, representing the mid-century belief in industrial progress.²² On the other side were the Amsterdam artists and activists, relaxed, smoking rolled cigarettes ("sjekkies") and joints ("stikkies"), simply waiting out the bureaucratic paralysis.²²

Within the village, the remaining Yugoslav guest workers, who had been housed in a building on the Dorpsstraat, had packed their suitcases and were peering nervously from behind their curtains, unsure of how to process the sudden influx of urban bohemians challenging the Dutch state.²² At one point, a police car drove agonizingly slowly to the

entrance of the village, assessed the sheer volume of the occupation, and quietly retreated.²² The occupation was absolute. The municipality, facing a massive public relations disaster and a deeply entrenched physical blockade supported by rightful property owners like Tante Jans, was forced to halt the demolition.⁷ On that day, Ruigoord was reborn.

Key Date in 1973	Event	Strategic Significance
Weeks prior to July	Urban activists camp covertly in the rectory garden. ²³	Establishes a localized vanguard; allows for logistical planning without triggering police eviction.
Sunday, July 22	Pastor G. van Dijk performs the last mass, deconsecrates the church, and hands the keys to the squatters. ⁶	Grants the squatters legitimate physical access and moral stewardship over the village's central architectural asset.
Monday, July 23	Hundreds of Amsterdam activists occupy the remaining homes; cars block demolition cranes. ⁷	The official "foundation" of the free state. Physical barricades force the state to abandon immediate demolition plans.

The Psychonauts and the Intellectual Architecture

The successful physical occupation of Ruigoord was merely the first step; sustaining the enclave required an ideological foundation capable of organizing a highly disparate group of anarchists, artists, and runaway youths. The village quickly evolved from a defensive squat into an active laboratory for cultural experimentation, driven by a pantheon of writers, poets, and eccentric philosophers.⁸

At the forefront of this intellectual vanguard were the writers Hans Plomp and Gerben Hellinga.⁹ Plomp, a poet and playwright born in 1944, and Hellinga, an author, playwright, and reviewer born in 1937, were not just tacticians of the occupation; they became the preeminent "psychonauts" of Ruigoord.⁹ Moving their families into the brick house ("Stenen Huis") next to the church on the very day of the kraak (July 23), they initially believed they might hold the village for perhaps three months; instead, they anchored a community that would last a lifetime.⁹

Plomp and Hellinga were deeply invested in the exploration of human consciousness and the cognitive expansion afforded by hallucinogens.⁹ They famously co-authored the comprehensive Dutch encyclopedia of recreational and psychedelic drugs, "Uit je bol".²⁹ Under their influence, Ruigoord became a haven for the exploration of mind-expanding substances, deliberately drawing Tibetans, Indigenous Americans, and representatives of various endangered global cultures to the harbor enclave to exchange esoteric knowledge.⁶ The village was conceptualized as a "Kosmisch Lek" (Cosmic Leak), a geographic focal point

where spiritual inspiration poured into the material plane.³¹

To manage the inherent chaos of an anarchist collective, Hellinga introduced an alternative system of governance and dispute resolution: the ancient Chinese divination text, the I Tjing (I Ching).⁹ Rather than relying strictly on conventional Western democratic voting, which frequently leads to factionalism and the tyranny of the majority, the community frequently consulted the I Tjing during critical collective crises.⁹ Hellinga's highly regarded Dutch translation of the text provided a framework for navigating the complex social dynamics of communal living.³³

The day-to-day governance was handled through a monthly village assembly held in a circle.²² The agenda typically focused on mundane rural disputes—fences, ditches, parcels of land, manure, and wandering animals.²² Remarkably, the assembly operated without a formal chairman.²² Order was restored organically by anyone who felt the discussion had devolved into chaos, a system that successfully resolved lingering political and personal conflicts without resorting to state-like coercion.²²

The Avant-Garde Ecosystem: Insects, Balloons, and Poetry

The cultural ecosystem of Ruigoord was further enriched by the integration of established avant-garde movements from Amsterdam. Chief among these was the involvement of Theo Kley, a central figure in the Dutch Provo movement and the founder of the "Insektensekte" (Insect Sect) and the "Deskundologisch Laboratorium" (Expertological Laboratory).³⁴

Founded in 1969 following a devastating oil spill in the Waddenzee, the Insektensekte was one of the earliest Dutch environmental action groups, utilizing absurdist theater and avant-garde art to protest ecological destruction.³⁴ Kley's work, which art critic Lambert Tegenbosch enthusiastically compared to the whimsical genius of Paul Klee in a 1972 edition of *de Volkskrant*, infused Ruigoord with a potent brand of ecological surrealism.³⁶ Kley, alongside figures like Robert Jasper Grootveld and photographer Cor Jaring, transformed the village into an active, performative protest site against the petrochemical reality of the surrounding Afrikahaven.³⁴

Furthermore, Gerben Hellinga brought his eccentric network, the *Amsterdams Ballon Gezelschap* (Amsterdam Balloon Society), to the village.⁹ Founded in 1972, this society was dedicated to the whimsical and the magical, organizing massive kite festivals, theatrical interventions, and psychedelic gatherings.⁹ They utilized an old Magic Bus, dubbed the *Luchtbus*, to travel and spread their ethos.⁹

The Sint-Gertrudiskerk, permanently saved from the

bulldozers, was repurposed as a secular temple of art and poetry.¹ It hosted the legendary Vurige Tongen (Burning Tongues) poetry festival, driven largely by Hans Plomp, which brought thinkers and doers together.²⁹ Prominent Dutch literary figures, such as the poet Simon Vinkenoog, became deeply embedded in the Ruigoord fabric, participating in events like the Landjuweel festival and celebrating the village as an essential "Oasis of Wonder".⁶

Economic Stagnation as an Ally: The Oil Crisis and the Free Zone

The survival of Ruigoord in its nascent months was highly precarious, constantly shadowed by the threat of municipal eviction and the looming cranes. However, the squatters' resolve was inadvertently fortified by a massive macro-economic and geopolitical shift: the 1973/1974 global oil crisis.⁶

As the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) proclaimed an oil embargo, the global economy contracted sharply.⁶ For the municipality of Amsterdam, this meant that the immediate expansion of the Afrikahaven became economically unfeasible.⁶ Capital investments in the Amsterdam harbor came to a sudden halt.²² The bureaucratic imperative to demolish the village lost its immediate economic justification, effectively freezing the municipality's agenda and providing the squatters with the most valuable asset in any territorial dispute: time.⁶

During this period of economic stagnation, Ruigoord transitioned from a temporary blockade into a highly organized "Cultural Freeplace".¹ Because the original houses had not been destroyed, the municipality, under pressure, even allocated some of the vacant properties to young, adventurous families seeking alternative living arrangements, thereby organically regenerating the demographic fabric of the village alongside the artists.²²

The Protracted Legal War and Eventual Institutionalization (1984-2000)

The conflict between the autonomous ideals of Ruigoord and the bureaucratic machinery of the Dutch state was not resolved by the oil crisis; it merely entered a prolonged cold war that defined the enclave's existence for over two decades.

By 1984, the local municipality of Haarlemmerliede en Spaarnwoude, recognizing the cultural and ecological value of the enclave that had blossomed within its borders, attempted to formally rezone Ruigoord as a "green zone" to permanently prohibit industrial development.⁶ However, this localized political effort was systematically blocked by the higher authority of the Provincial government, setting the stage for a protracted legal war over the sovereignty of the territory.⁶

The jurisdictional friction reached a breaking point in November 1995 when Mayor IJsselmuiden of Haarlemmerliede accepted an offer to become the mayor of Edam-Volendam, explicitly citing the sheer exhaustion of the 22-year legal battle against the aggressively expansionist municipality of Amsterdam as his primary reason for resigning.⁶ With the local political buffer removed, the path was cleared for Amsterdam to aggressively reassert its hegemony over the harbor territory.⁶ On January 1, 1997, the city of Amsterdam formally annexed Ruigoord.⁶

The annexation was swiftly followed by a massive projection of state power. Environmental activists had established the Groenoord action camp near the village to block further

ecological destruction.¹ On October 7, 1997, 200 riot police officers of the Mobiele Eenheid (ME) were deployed in a militarized operation to violently evict the Groenoord camp.¹ While the riot police successfully cleared the secondary camp, allowing the Port of Amsterdam to flatten the surrounding landscape for construction, the core village of Ruigoord itself remained intact, heavily defended by legal injunctions and immense public sympathy.⁶

The legal confrontation escalated through the hierarchy of the Dutch judicial system, eventually advancing all the way to the Court of Justice of the European Union.⁶ Facing the reality that forcibly evicting a deeply entrenched, internationally renowned artist community would result in an insurmountable public relations catastrophe, the municipality of Amsterdam sought a political de-escalation.⁶

In the year 2000, a historic compromise was reached. The municipality officially legalized the existence of Ruigoord, permitting it to remain as a permanent, protected enclave surrounded entirely by the operational infrastructure of the harbor.⁶ The transition from an illegal squat to a sanctioned entity required profound structural reorganization. The community formed the Stichting Ruigoord (Ruigoord Foundation), with Ulke Hoekstra serving as its first chairman, to act as the formal legal interface between the artists and the state.¹³ Under this new paradigm, residential living was heavily restricted, and the village was technically reclassified as an atelier zone—a village of artist studios, performance spaces, and ecological projects.¹³ While some purists viewed this compromise as a dilution of the original anarchist spirit, it legally guaranteed the physical survival of the village, ensuring that the church and the historic homes would not fall to the bulldozers.¹³

Year	Milestone in the Legal and Institutional War
1984	Haarlemmerliede attempts to rezone Ruigoord as a protected "green zone"; blocked by the Province. ⁶
1995	Mayor IJsselmuiden resigns, exhausted by the 22-year legal battle with Amsterdam. ⁶
1997 (Jan)	Amsterdam formally annexes the territory of Ruigoord. ⁶
1997 (Oct)	200 riot police violently evict the adjacent Groenoord environmental action camp. ¹
2000	Historic legal compromise reached; Ruigoord legalized as an enclave and atelier zone under the Stichting Ruigoord. ⁶

Comparative Urbanism: Ruigoord within the European Autonomous Landscape

Ruigoord's trajectory is not an isolated phenomenon; it operates within a vital, interconnected network of European "free cultural spaces" that emerged during the late 20th century as a direct counter-narrative to capitalist urban planning.³ To fully grasp Ruigoord's sociological significance, it must be analyzed alongside its continental contemporaries, most notably Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen, and domestic equivalents such as Fort Pannerden in the Netherlands.⁴²

These spaces share a common spatial etiology: the appropriation of derelict, state-owned, or militarily abandoned land by marginalized subcultures seeking to establish localized, democratic, and anti-capitalist modes of dwelling.³ They represent what urban theorists term "dwelling as difference"—spaces where the everyday rhythms of social reproduction, collective action, and alternative archiving defy mainstream historical narratives and normative property laws.²⁶

Autonomous Zone	Origins and Context	Trajectory and Legal Status
Ruigoord (Amsterdam, NL)	Squatted in 1973 to prevent the demolition of an agrarian village for petrochemical port expansion. ¹	Transitioned from an illegal occupation to a legalized enclave (2000) heavily focused on art, poetry, and ecological integration. ⁶

Autonomous Zone	Origins and Context	Trajectory and Legal Status
Freetown Christiania (Copenhagen, DK)	Founded in 1971 by squatting an abandoned military zone in response to housing shortages. ⁴²	Grew into a massive, independent community of nearly 900 people with its own internal economy and ongoing friction with the state. ⁴²
Fort Pannerden (Nijmegen, NL)	An 1869 military fort squatted in the late 1990s as a rural autonomous space. ⁴³	Evicted in 2006 by a massive, €1 million military-style police operation; subsequently resquatted and legalized via a local council deal. ⁴³

While Christiania developed into a dense, heavily populated micro-city with a highly complex internal economy, Ruigoord intentionally retained its intimate, village-scale aesthetic.³ Furthermore, Ruigoord's battle was uniquely defined by its hyper-industrial surroundings. Unlike urban squats in the center of Amsterdam or Copenhagen (such as the violently evicted Ungdomshuset)⁴², Ruigoord forced a symbiotic, albeit highly tense, coexistence with global maritime logistics. The enclave exists as a green bubble within a layer cake of municipal, national, and international governance systems.³

The "Symbiocene" and Contemporary Ecological Resistance

In the contemporary era, Ruigoord has evolved to embody what ecological theorists term the "Symbiocene"—an epoch characterized by the mutually beneficial integration of human activity with the natural world, standing in direct opposition to the destructive extraction of the Anthropocene.³ In stark contrast to the surrounding industrial "explosion zones" (plofzone) of stored fuels and the mechanical hum of wind turbines, the villagers cultivate food forests, protect local ecology, and host interactive, environmentally themed art installations.³

The aesthetics of the village today reflect a community that has successfully mythologized its own landscape.⁴⁵ Visitors navigating the tall grass and reeds encounter a soothing pond featuring a mechanical octopus (Hydra) crafted by artist Zoro Feigl, and boundary markers like the healing hands flag of Willem de Ridder, establishing the physical limits of the sanctuary.⁴⁶ Even the overwhelming noise of the adjacent maritime industry has been mitigated through cooperative diplomacy: massive oil tankers, such as the Geo Caribbean and Stemat Spirit, are now instructed to dock with their propellers facing north to reduce acoustic pollution spilling into the village.⁴⁶

However, Ruigoord is not merely a passive, nostalgic museum of 1970s hippie culture; it remains an active, vital participant in 21st-century ecological resistance.¹ The space continues to serve as a strategic staging ground for contemporary environmental movements. Groups such as Extinction

Rebellion (XR) and Kappen met Kolen frequently utilize the Ruigoord compound to gather, plan, and execute direct climate actions against the black coal trains that transport fossil fuels through the very harbor that surrounds the village.¹ The foundational ethos of the Insektensekte lives on in these modern blockades.

The Enduring Legacy of the Scharrelmens

The passing of founder Hans Plomp on August 6, 2024, at the age of 80, underscored the generational transition occurring within the enclave.²⁸ Plomp, who had battled metastasized prostate cancer, chose to direct his own exit, having discussed euthanasia with his doctor.²⁸ His farewell ceremony, held on the hottest day of the year in the very church he helped secure from the bulldozers, was a profound testament to the community he forged, featuring poetry, music, and the symbolic release of the Ruigoord psylist symbol on a balloon.³¹

Plomp leaves behind a profound ideological concept that continues to define Ruigoord's necessity in the modern world: the concept of the scharrelmens (the "free-range human").³¹ Plomp observed a tragic irony in contemporary Dutch society: while immense public pressure successfully created organic, "free-range" conditions for livestock (scharrelmelk, scharrelkip), it simultaneously forced human beings into increasingly sterile, highly regulated, and spatially constricted urban environments.⁴⁹ Ruigoord exists as the ultimate architectural and social antidote to this systemic domestication—an oasis where the "free-range human" can play, create, and exist outside the metrics of capitalist productivity and bureaucratic determinism.³¹ Hennie van der Vegt's portrait of Plomp alongside Saint Geertruida perfectly encapsulates this legacy, blending the sacred history of the village with its modern psychedelic stewardship.²⁹

The events that transpired in the municipality of Haarlemmerliede on July 23, 1973, represent far more than a

footnote in Dutch urban history. When Pastor van Dijk handed over the keys to the Sint-Gertrudiskerk, and the urban avant-garde barricaded the streets against the advancing demolition crews, they initiated an architectural and cultural shockwave that preserved a vital space for human spontaneity. Ruigoord's survival through decades of legal warfare, riot police deployments, and the relentless expansion of global petrochemical infrastructure is a testament to the sheer resilience of ideological conviction. By transitioning from an illegal squat to a constitutionally protected cultural freeplace, Ruigoord demonstrated that alternative spatial paradigms can indeed survive within the hyper-regulated mechanisms of the modern European state. As the original founders pass into history, the enclave they secured remains an indispensable sanctuary for the scharrelmens—a permanent, breathing monument to the belief that even in the shadow of industrial totality, a determined collective can carve out an oasis of wonder.

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werd Ruigoord een wereldwijd bekend fenomeen. Momenteel telt het dorpje nog veertig huizen en honderd bewoners, in de betrekkelijke rust van conflicterende belangen en bestemmingsplannen. Als het aan de gemeente Amsterdam, de eigenaresse van het gebied, ligt zullen de graafmachines hier spoedig een eind aan maken. We togen naar Ruigoord om Mignon en Wim, twee bewoners van het dorp aan het woord te laten., accessed June 5, 2026, http://www.ravagedigitaal.org/1993/136/Het_woord_is_aan136.htm

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